



October 3, 2025

The Honorable Stephanie A. Gallagher
United States District Judge
c/o Office of the Federal Public Defender
100 South Charles Street
Tower II, 9th Floor
Baltimore, Maryland 21201

Dear Judge Gallagher,

I am writing today to speak to the character of my father, Mark Unkenholz, and the charges he has plead guilty to. Before this unfortunate affair, I have known him to have two motivating drives, his family and his work. On the one hand, growing up, he has always been a caring father who, almost to a fault, strove to fix any problems me or the rest of the family faced as if they were his own. On the other hand, while I was less privy to the work side of his life, it was clear that his job at the National Security Agency was very important to him. I was always fascinated by the sense of purpose and duty he seemed to derive from his work there, which in turn imparted upon me a strong desire to understand this world that mattered so much to my father.

As a result, Mark was one of the primary inspiration for me to pursue work within the intelligence community. After finishing my undergraduate degree, I spent a summer working in the Director's Summer Program at the National Security Agency, a three month research internship in which young mathematicians are given the opportunity to experience and understand the important mission of agency. The experience left me with an overall positive perception of work at the Agency, as well as a greater appreciation of the important work Mark was pursuing while not with his family.

The events of the past three years have unfortunately tainted this perception. The agreed upon facts of the present case establish that the actions in question were taken in the regular course of conducting his work, with the intention of conducting this work to the best of his abilities. In light of this fact, regardless of whether specific procedural boundaries were crossed, this case is a gross acceleration of a matter that could have been dealt with in a more reasoned and mature manner that did not needlessly terminate the

career of an exemplary 40-year veteran of the community. While my belief in the mission and the people pursuing it has not diminished, I am greatly disheartened to see these same people whose work go so unnoticed be discarded with such disregard.

The callous and self destructive behavior exhibited by the government in this matter has given me pause regarding the wisdom of following my father's footsteps. Given the effect the governments actions on my opinion of work at the Agency, it is also not hard to imagine the detrimental effects these events have had on moral at the agency.

While damage has been done that cannot be undone, the vital mission of the Agency remains. In light of this fact, I hope that this case will serve as a cautionary tale that encourages more deliberate and sensible responses to future matters relating to the use of sensitive material for work conducted in pursuit of preserving the security of the nation.

Sincerely

Samuel M. Johnston